

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Air and Radiation  
Office of Transportation and Air Quality**

**“Clean Air Transportation Communities” RFP Conference Call  
Q&A from March 6, 2001**

**Introductory notes:**

(Mary Walsh first addressed some of the questions received by phone and e-mail prior to the conference call)

**A. Who is eligible to submit?**

Only governmental agencies at the local, regional, state, multi-state, or tribal level (no federal agencies) that are actively involved with transportation, air quality, and/or climate change are eligible to submit proposals. Entities such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Councils of Governments, and regional transportation authorities (public agencies, not privately operated) are included in the “regional” designation. However, one of the criteria for receiving funding is that the eligible agency must form partnerships with other organizations, whether public or private, for-profit or non-profit/not-for-profit. This requirement is intended to encourage applicants to seek a diversity of perspectives and to seek opportunities to leverage the seed money provided by this competition with resources from partners.

Organizations not eligible themselves that are still interested in participating should seek a partnership with an eligible agency. When an award is made, the lead organization submitting the proposal is the one to receive funding, and passes funding through to partners consistent with EPA grant rules and state rules governing such relationships.

Note: In situations in which there are multiple eligible applicants under a single proposal, one of them must be specified as the lead organization to whom the EPA will allocate the funding; the others will be designated as partners.

**B. What kind of proposals are eligible for this grant competition?**

For the full and detailed explanation, see the Request for Proposals at [www.epa.gov/otaq/whatsnew.htm](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/whatsnew.htm) (look under the February listings). Before one decides whether or not a proposal is a good fit for the competition, consider:

1) Does it meet the “innovation” criterion? It must be a truly new project that has never been tried before in the United States. It must pilot some new technology, or methodology, or approach to transportation-related emissions reduction. It cannot be a simple replication of a program or an idea already demonstrated elsewhere. However, it can combine elements of existing programs in a novel way to create a more effective program than can be achieved separately.

2) Will the project be generating actual transportation-related emissions reductions by the end of the project period (2 years)? The project must be actually demonstrating measurable emissions reductions, not simply setting the stage for the benefits to accrue. Creating an environment attractive to new programs or projects that will not be implemented by the end of the project period (two calendar years) will not satisfy this criterion, however worthwhile the work. If the proposal includes outreach/education, planning, research, visioning, etc., this must be carried through to the stage where the actual emissions reductions are at least beginning to be accrued.

EPA understands that the desired benefits may be in only the early stages and that the bulk of the benefits to be gained may only happen over a period of years; in fact, it will consider the sustainability of proposed projects in the evaluation process. Applicants are encouraged to make an estimate of the long-term benefits of the program, not only the short-term benefits expected at the end of the project period.

3) Are the emissions reductions measurable—is there a methodology established for estimating benefits, both for the proposal (prior to implementation) and during the actual implementation phase? In order for the project administrators to evaluate the relative success of their program, and to help others to assess whether or not a program of that type might be worthwhile to replicate elsewhere, it is important that the plan include a methodology for estimating actual results. Therefore, EPA has made this element a criterion for judging proposals. Applicants must offer as part of the proposal a rough estimate of potential emissions benefits, using accepted methods (such as those found on the EPA website—see question “U.” below, for more information).

#### **C. How can I obtain a grant application kit, with the required forms SF-424 and SF-424a?**

E-mail Mary Walsh at [walsh.mary@epa.gov](mailto:walsh.mary@epa.gov) with your request, and indicate whether you prefer WordPerfect or MS Word format.

#### **Open Q&A Period:**

#### **D. What distinguishes this grant competition from OTAQ’s Mobile Source Outreach Assistance (Section 105) grant competition?**

Briefly, the main differences are:

- 1) This competition solicits a range of proposals that will directly reduce transportation-related emissions; the other grant competition is specifically targeted at proposals dealing with outreach and education.
- 2) This competition requires the applicant to estimate emissions reductions, the other competition has no such requirement.
- 3) This competition limits eligible applicants to state, local, regional, multi-state, and tribal government agencies actively involved with transportation, air quality, and/or climate change issues; the other competition is open to non-governmental organizations as well as governmental organizations.
- 4) Grant authority for this competition comes from Section 103(b)(3) of the Clean Air Act;

authority for the other competition comes from Section 105. (Different sorts of projects may be funded, depending upon the grant authority.)

This point is also discussed in Section VIII. Q. of the Request for Proposals.

**E. What distinguishes this grant competition from the Department of Energy's (DOE's) "Clean Cities" grant competition?**

The primary difference between the grant proposals solicited in this competition and those solicited under the Clean Cities program is that the latter focuses on alternative fuels; specifically, creating a national network of locally-based, sustainable, alternative fuels markets, rather than focusing on improved air quality and lowered greenhouse gas emissions. (However, there is sufficient-enough room for project proposals to overlap). This is because the legislative driver for Clean Cities is the Energy Policy Act (EPACT), whose goal is to achieve U.S. energy independence (e.g., reduce dependence on imported petroleum), whereas our driver is the Clean Air Act.

Clean Cities funding mechanisms also differ in that Clean Cities projects use a multiplicity of funding sources, from both within and outside Clean Cities. Sources may include DOE direct support of the Clean Cities programs, as well as local grants, CMAQ funding, grants from Clean City Coalition partners, etc.

Regarding the overlap issue: over the past few years, Clean Cities has been working more closely with EPA to include an environmental message in the Clean Cities program, since just buying a vehicle that can run on alternative fuel doesn't guarantee that it will run on the alternative fuel. (EPACT does not specify that the vehicles have to be dedicated alternative fuel vehicles, so often, they are not, because of resale value and other concerns.) However, by adding more of an environmental message up front, DOE hopes that the Clean Cities projects will encourage more actual use of the alternative fuel.

**Funding**

**F. Is the maximum available funding \$750,000?**

Yes. However, it is unlikely that only a couple of awards will be made. Depending on what is received, it is more probable that there will be one or a few relatively larger awards and several relatively smaller ones chosen. We anticipate that this will become an annual program, expanding so that there will be an increase in available funding in the future.

**G. Are funds capital or operational?**

Funds can be used for any cost item falling within the budget categories contained within SF-424, except construction (of buildings), as long as those costs are allocable, allowable, and directly in support of the project to be proposed. Capital expenditures are generally allowable with the prior approval of the awarding agency. As long as such costs are itemized in the application, the award official's signature on the award document would constitute approval. In

reviewing the proposed budget, EPA must be able to assure itself that the costs are reasonable, necessary, and, again, allocable to the project.

(Follow-up note: You may find it worthwhile to look through the three pages of links to grants information you can access by going to: <http://oaspub.epa.gov/> and clicking on “Search” on the left-hand side. When the blank space appears, type “grants.” The information accessible here includes guidance on writing grants, general information on grants, and specific types of grants.)

**H. Is there a list of previously-funded awards?**

This is the first time this award has become available, so there is not. However, EPA’s Transportation Air Quality Center (TRAQ) website contains a database of information on other transportation and air quality related projects funded by EPA at [www.epa.gov/otaa/traq/](http://www.epa.gov/otaa/traq/).

**I. Is there opportunity for increasing/decreasing the size of a project based on available funding? An example would be a project flexible enough that it could be done on a smaller scale with less funding.**

Yes, there is possibility for negotiations to downsize projects.

**J. How will the funding be allocated (i.e., reimbursement versus lump sum)?**

Normally, grantees draw down the available funding as needed, since they must only draw enough money to meet their immediate cash needs. Grant rules require that the money withdrawn be spent within three business days of receipt. Funding received under the grant cannot be put into an interest-bearing account. In certain circumstances, money can be withdrawn as a lump sum, but the three day rule and the rule against placing funds in an interest-bearing account still apply. The Project Officer and EPA’s grants staff will scrutinize closely any such action.

**K. Can EPA provide a letter of notification of funding so that organizations are able to obtain matching funds?**

Although this grant does not require a match in funding, applicants may choose to do so. However, EPA will not notify the grant recipients until our grants office approves our award selections.

**Eligibility**

**L. Can a grant submission have two separate, but related, projects within it?**

Yes. (Alternatively, the projects can be submitted separately, but each will be judged on its own individual merits.)

**M. Does the proposal have to specify the location of where the project will be implemented?**

In order to be eligible, the proposal should define as specifically as possible the locality (or localities) designated for implementation.

**N. Is it possible to better implement an existing program? Specifically, if a project was not done properly in one region, but could be done better in another, would such a proposal be eligible?**

es, but the proposal would have to demonstrate that there is some substantially different dimension to it that would allow the new version of the project to succeed where the existing one did not (for example, a demographic study could be done to better target the implementation of the idea). The innovation of the new version of the project will need to be emphasized to demonstrate to the reviewers that the project would pilot a new idea, not simply try an existing idea again.

**O. Are you looking for innovation in terms of technology or in an existing project?**

Innovation is not limited to technology, but can also include the implementation of existing ideas in new ways, in new contexts. Potential applicants may wish to examine how existing elements of transportation-related technologies and methodologies might be combined in novel ways that create synergies not previously exploited.

**P. Would innovations in outreach education be eligible for a project?**

Outreach education, by itself, is not fundable because the project must demonstrate that measurable emissions benefits will be gained as a direct result of the funded project. If the outreach project includes some follow-up portion that would allow it to be capable of evaluation in terms of the actual emissions benefits gained, it would be potentially fundable. However, it is important to note that the proposal must include a ballpark estimate of emissions to be gained, and tell what approach was used to obtain the estimate, in order for the reviewers to get an idea of the potential effectiveness of the program in proportion to the investment of resources made. (Note: the Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) holds an annual competition for grants entitled, "Mobile Source Outreach Assistance Competition," that specifically targets outreach and education, and requires (at present) no estimate of emissions reductions to be gained. This competition is closed for this fiscal year, but will re-open in November 2001. It will be announced at the OTAQ website under [www.epa.gov/otaq/](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/) under "What's New.")

**Q. What is the definition of a multi-state agency?**

A multi-state agency acts as an umbrella organization of government agencies operating at the state, regional, local, or tribal level; it is not necessarily a statutory organization. Examples include, but are not limited to, STAPPA, ALAPCO, National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals, NESCAUM, WESTAR, National Association of Counties, National Tribal Environmental Council, etc.

**R. Would a project be eligible if it cannot be adapted or replicated successfully? For**

**example, a project could apply only to tribal settings and not to rest of country.**

EPA would consider such proposals on a case-by case basis. Replicability—the potential of the project to serve as a model for other projects after the initial pilot demonstrates its effectiveness—is an important criterion in the evaluation process. EPA is not simply interested in the funded project’s ability to reduce emissions, but on its potential “ripple effect” as it is adopted and adapted in some form more widely in the future.

**S. How is “campus” defined? Would a downtown entertainment district qualify as a “campus?”**

This term is was described in the Request for Proposals, mentioning as examples, but it could also reasonably apply to a corporate campus or business district. The Request for Proposals mentions campuses as involving various buildings or facilities located over a limited geographic distance that require transportation...or other “connecting” activities as a major component of doing business. A downtown entertainment district could be considered a campus in this context.

### **Review Process and Award**

**T. Who will be the reviewers of the proposals? Are they internal to EPA or external?**

The evaluation team continues to be assembled, based on the expertise needed, as indicated by the content and number of notices of intent received. Preliminarily, reviewers may include members from EPA’s Office of Transportation and Air Quality in Ann Arbor and D.C., EPA’s Regional transportation and tribal coordinators (at least one regional representative will review proposals located in that region), other EPA offices with relevant experience, and other federal agencies, such as members of DOT’s TCSP Program.

**U. Will reference points be provided in order to quantify reductions? Otherwise, there seems to be the potential for subjectivity in the review process, depending on who the technical evaluators are and what numbers are considered in each proposal.**

A standard list of reference points will not be provided, as the proposals do not need to include precise numbers for reductions in transportation-related emissions and vehicle miles traveled. EPA is more concerned with rough estimates, and expects estimates to at least be within the proper order of magnitude and pass the “laugh test,” rather than expecting absolute numbers. EPA recognizes that direct rigorous comparisons between proposals will be impossible, but is interested in a relative sense of the emissions benefits expected vs. the investment of resources. There is, however, guidance available on EPA's OTAQ website ([www.epa.gov/otaq/](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/)), including such locations as the TRAQ Center Voluntary Measures home page [www.epa.gov/otaq/traq/](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/traq/), to assist in quantifying reductions. For “typical” annual light-duty vehicle and light-duty truck emissions can be found at [www.epa.gov/otaq/ann-emit.htm](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/ann-emit.htm). (See question above for composition of evaluators.)

**V. Will at least one award be made to a tribal organization?**

Although EPA has made a special effort to solicit proposals from tribal organizations, EPA has not earmarked funds in this competition for proposals from tribal organizations. EPA is making a special effort to encourage tribal organizations to apply because it believes it needs to do more to understand the unique opportunities for emissions reduction that may accrue from partnerships with such groups.

**W. When will the award recipients be notified?**

EPA anticipates announcing the awards at the end of May, or early June. Those not selected for award this year will be notified as well. Note that EPA will not make this announcement until its grants office approves the selections. Notification will follow the five-day Congressional review period that follows approval of the review team's selections by EPA's grants office.